

REMARKS

Initially, Applicant would like to thank the Examiner for acknowledging consideration of each of the documents cited in the Information Disclosure Statements filed on November 21, 2005 and December 27, 2005. Applicant would also like to thank the Examiner for indicating the allowability of claim 15, if rewritten to include all of the limitations of the base and any intervening claims.

However, Applicant again notes that the previous Official Action dated February 4, 2005 incorrectly attributed the filing date of an Information Disclosure Statement filed on February 19, 2002 as November 19, 2001. Further, the previous Official Action indicated that several of the Japanese language documents cited in the Information Disclosure Statement were not considered "because no English language translation was provided of these documents". In this regard, there is no requirement that an Applicant submit English language translations of Japanese language documents; rather, the Japanese language documents cited in the Information Disclosure Statement were submitted in full compliance with all statutory and regulatory requirements that apply to the citation to such documents in an Information Disclosure Statement, including 37 C.F.R. 1.98. In particular, an English language abstract of each of these documents was provided, thus satisfying the requirement for a statement of relevance. Accordingly, the Examiner is again respectfully requested to consider and cite each of the documents listed on the PTO-1449 Form which was attached to the Information Disclosure Statement filed on February 19, 2002. The Examiner is requested to initial the appropriate spaces on the above-noted PTO-1449 Form and to return a copy of the Form to the Applicant with the next official communication in the present application to confirm consideration of these documents.

In the outstanding Official Action, Figure 2A was objected to for an informality.

Claims 13-14 and 16-20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over SATO (U.S. Patent No. 5,956,328) in view of OMORI (U.S. Patent No. 6,239,666). Claim 15 was objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but was otherwise indicated as allowable if rewritten into independent form to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Attached hereto, Applicant is providing a Replacement Figure 2A which has been revised to correct the informality noted in the outstanding Official Action. In view of the attached Replacement Figure 2A, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the objection to Figure 2A.

Upon entry of the present amendment, Applicant will have cancelled claims 13-4 and 16-20 without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein. Claim 15 will have been amended into independent form to include substantially all of the limitations of the base claim 14, from which claim 15 depended directly. The cancellation of claims 13-14 and 16-20 and the amendment of claim 15 into independent form should not be considered an indication of Applicant's acquiescence as to the propriety of the outstanding rejection. Rather, Applicant has canceled claims 13-14 and 16-20 and amended claim 15 into independent form merely in order to expedite prosecution of the present application and to obtain early allowance of a claim.

In view of the herein-contained cancellation of claims 13-14 and 16-20 and amendment to claim 15, the rejection of each of claims 13-14 and 16-20 and the objection to claim 15 have been rendered moot. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that claim 15 is allowable at least for the reason that this claim was previously indicated as allowable by the Examiner, if rewritten into independent form to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

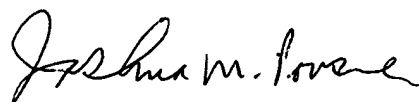
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Applicant submits that the present application is in condition for allowance, and respectfully requests an indication to that effect. Applicant has canceled rejected claims and amended an objected-to claim into independent form, without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein. Applicant has further submitted a Replacement Figure for an objected-to drawing. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the outstanding objections and rejection, as well as an indication of the allowability of the claim now pending in due course.

The claims which have been cancelled in this amendment, which have not been specifically noted as being cancelled to overcome a rejection based upon the prior art, should be considered to have been cancelled for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto.

Should the Examiner have any questions, please contact the undersigned at the telephone number provided below.

Respectfully submitted,
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